

Committee on Public Works and Transportation

## Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Room 2185, Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Telephone: AREA CODE 202, 225-4472

May 16, 1995

Dear Colleague:

USA Today calls it "The Polluters and Developers Protection Act." It has also been called "The Polluters' Bill of Rights", and "The Dirty Water Bill." The Atlanta Constitution calls it "a veritable orgy of anti-environmental excess."

The San Francisco Chronicle says, "Call it the polluters' revenge act of 1995. It is a hopelessly regressive gutting of the most successful piece of environmental legislation of the last quarter of a century, and it has been bought and paid for -- and even written -- by the very interests the original law was meant to regulate."

What they are all talking about is HR 961, the so-called Clean Water Amendments of 1995. And the comments of these papers are typical of editorials from all over the country.

Why should we vote for a bill that would, as USA Today says, "dramatically ease requirements on industrial waste, urban runoff and sewage treatment and permit more waivers for pouring pollution into lakes and rivers"?

The municipal stormwater program needed some clarifications. Instead this bill repeals the entire stormwater program for industry.

This bill would allow essentially raw sewage to be dumped one mile off our beaches. No city will even admit to seeking that provision.

The Governors of the coastal states wanted minor reforms of the Coastal Zone Management non-point program. Instead this bill repeals the program entirely.

The wetlands program needed reform to make it work in a more reasonable, less burdensome way. Instead the bill defines 60 - 80% of all wetlands out of the program (including a large part of the Everglades), creates an enormously expensive new wetlands bureaucracy to spend billions on a national prior classification project, and requires the federal government to buy enormous amounts of land now in the private sector.

What people most want from the Clean Water Act is protection of the water they use from major industrial and sewage dischargers upstream. Instead this bill grants these major dischargers a long series of new loopholes, waivers, and rollbacks of existing standards. Under this bill, major polluters will be able to turn off treatment facilities they have already built and are operating. Discharge of industrial toxics will increase.

The one area where this bill did anything helpful was that it increased the authorized funding levels for sewage treatment and for agricultural runoff programs. However, even this one positive feature has now been mostly removed from the bill.

This bill is a mistake and an embarrassment. Whatever your view on individual provisions, you should not want this bill on your record. This bill should be rejected, and then we should start over to produce a bill which is moderate, which finds better ways to provide the environmental protections we have today, and which does not give us lower clean water standards than we have already achieved.

I urge you to vote YES on the motion to recommit and to vote NO on final passage.

Sincerely yours,

signed  
NORMAN Y. MINETA